

ECONOMIC COUNCIL LETTER

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CIVIL LIBERTIES 963981

Letter No. 51
Monday, December 20, 1937

On June 8, 1936 the United States Senate, by Resolution 266, created a sub-committee of the regular Committee on Education and Labor. This sub-committee has been popularly known as the "Civil Liberties Committee." The pertinent part of this resolution is as follows:

"RESOLVED, That the Committee on Education and Labor is authorized and directed to make an investigation of violations of the rights of free speech and assembly and undue interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively."

SUB-COMMITTEE

Pursuant thereto, this sub-committee, consisting of Senators Robert M. LaFollette, Chairman, and Elbert D. Thomas, proceeded to investigate strike-breaking and industrial espionage. It made two reports, on February 8 and July 22, 1937. The Senate first appropriated \$15,000 for its use - last February \$40,000 more.

SUBPOENAED COUNCIL

Then apparently this sub-committee decided to investigate what it calls "vigilante" organizations. It subpoenaed, among others, the New York State Economic Council. The date of appearance, first fixed for November 15th, was postponed to December 15, and then to January 18, 1938.

BUT WE HAVE CHAMPIONED CIVIL LIBERTIES

Let it be said at once that the Council has not at any time violated any one "of the rights of free speech and assembly and undue interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively." We have championed those rights. Our Board of Directors on November 23, 1934 formally voted to request the President and Congress (among other things) "to assure to the working man the right, free from coercion from the employer or anybody else, either to join any labor union, or to refrain from so joining, and the full right to work unmolested." This position we have consistently supported.

DON'T BELIEVE WE COME WITHIN SCOPE

Nevertheless our legal counsel advise us that a senate committee is all-powerful (within the limits of its authority) and can bring by subpoena any person or books or papers before it. We do not ourselves believe - nor does our counsel - that we come within the scope of the senate resolution just quoted. We have so stated to the investigators of the Senate Committee. But these investigators contend that the committee itself will decide this - after they see such papers and records as they desire to see!

BUT WE ARE BEING INVESTIGATED

On this pretext, investigators of this committee (courteous and intelligent young men) are now in their fourth week of examination within our relatively small office. They have interrupted our regular work. They have read and made copies of letters and papers that cannot by the wildest stretch of the imagination be included within the senate resolution. They desire us to surrender copies of letters from persons unknown to us, letters expressing views with which we are not necessarily in accord - of preliminary drafts of our own writings (Council Letters, etc.) that were substantially changed before publication - of confidential memoranda made by members of the Council Staff with respect to proposed publications - memoranda made at the request of the Council's President solely for the purpose of obtaining improved phrasing, more complete truth. They are conducting a fishing expedition.

THEY SEEK EVIDENCE

These investigators are not looking solely for evidence of "violations of the rights of free speech and assembly" - or for "undue interference with the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively." They state they also desire to search for evidence of possible anti-communist and anti-semitic activities! These, they say, are invariably found to accompany the kinds of activities described by the Senate resolution, though there is not one word in the resolution that warrants such a search.

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WE ARE AGAINST
COMMUNISM,
ALL RIGHT

Now anybody who ever heard of the Economic Council knows it is opposed to communism. No Senate committee is required to find that out. We have shouted it from the housetops, broadcast it on the air, published it whenever we had the money - asserted it wherever we had the chance.

BUT OPPOSE
ANTI-SEMITISM

But we of course oppose anti-semitism. Indeed, several of the most distinguished Jews in the United States are on our Board of Directors.

OTHER
ORGANIZATIONS

The investigators seek to pry into our correspondence, if any, with other organizations which seem to them to be likewise "anti-communistic." What can be their reason for this?

REPLIES TO
"THE COMING
SLAVERY"

They have asked to see the many hundred replies to our coast-to-coast broadcast last June 11th on "The Coming Slavery." Among these they would find a penciled letter from the wife of a worker in Warren, Ohio, who on June 13, 1937, appealed to us in these words:

" . . . We are just plain American working people. My father works at the Republic Steel Corporation here and at this time he is in the mill. My husband works at the Blank Company (they had a ten day sitdown strike), now they are going to try to make my husband join the C.I.O. We don't believe in communism. Our police don't do a thing. The C.I.O. pickets walk all around this town with clubs and pieces of iron pipe." . . . (Mass pickets were trying to force the men out.) " . . . So I ask you what chance do we have in a town like this? It seems to me that all of our officials are in with the C.I.O. . . . All of my people were born and raised in Warren, but I am beginning to think we may as well go to Russia, or are we going to have what is happening in Spain . . . It makes me mad when I think of how we were just beginning to get caught up after the depression."

THESE
COMMUNICATIONS
SHOULD BE
PROTECTED

By what twisting of the words of the senate resolution can these investigators claim the right to these communications? In that broadcast we urged Congress to lay no more burdens on Private Enterprise, but to adjourn and go home. Many persons replied - some of them writing doubtless as they would not have written had they thought the Government would seize their letters and read them. Are they not entitled to protection?

WE LACK
MONEY TO FIGHT

To fight this matter through the courts would cost us a great deal of money. We haven't got the money. Some of the papers we have not tried to prevent the investigators from taking. But by advice of counsel we have told them that we do not consent to their taking certain others - that if they decide to seize them, that is their affair.

OUR MEMBERS AND
BOOKS OF ACCOUNT

Likewise, by advice of counsel, we are respectfully declining to give out our list of members and their subscriptions and our books of account - until the Senate Committee hears us in person and orders us to do so. And we shall keep faith with that worker's wife in Warren - we shall refuse to place her in peril by disclosing her name.

WHAT STARTED
THIS?

Why is this investigation being made? Who instigated it? Read carefully now. It is a matter of common knowledge, established by a series of congressional investigations, that the Communist Party is seeking to overthrow the Government of the United States as now constituted - that it is availing itself of every resource. Its members or agents have organized or secured control of many organizations - all working to undermine the American System. Of these organizations none is more prominent or larger in membership than the American League Against War and Fascism.

READ
CAREFULLY
NOW

What is the American League Against War and Fascism? We find the answer in the New York Public Library - in a statement by Earl Browder (head of the Communist Party of the U. S. A.) published in the Communist International's Magazine (Jan. 15, 1934, p. 78):

LISTEN TO
EARL BROWDER

"Our most successful application of the united front has been in the anti-war and anti-fascist movement. We led a highly successful U. S. Congress against war, which brought together 2616 delegates from all over the country . . . The Congress from the beginning was led by our Party quite openly . . . The Congress set up a prominent organization on a federative basis called The American League Against War and Fascism."

Miss Dorothy Thompson, in her Column last Monday, speaking of Communist activity in the U. S., said:

MISS DOROTHY THOMPSON

"They" (the communists) "are out to overthrow it" (capitalism) "by seepage. They get their members into every labor organization under false pretenses. They camouflage themselves under relief groups for Spain, and organizations against war and fascism." (Underscoring ours)

WHAT THE ORGAN OF AMERICAN LEAGUE AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM CLAIMS.

What has this camouflaged communist American League Against War and Fascism got to do with the Senate Civil Liberties Committee? Just this - In their magazine, "Fight," issue of March, 1937, the origin of the Senate Civil Liberties Committee was reported as follows by Henry Zon. We are advised that Mr. Zon is the Washington correspondent of the radical Federated Press and was formerly London manager of the same agency. We quote:

"The investigation" (by the LaFollette Committee) "was born in the Cosmos Club in Washington one February evening in 1936. Present at the meeting were some 15 people, including John L. Lewis, Gardner Jackson, of the American Civil Liberties Union, Dorothy Detzer, of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Senator Robert LaFollette, now chairman of the sub-committee on education and labor conducting the inquiry, and other liberals and socially-minded people."

"From the discussion there was evolved the idea of a Senatorial investigation of the violations of civil liberties. Senator LaFollette agreed to go to bat for it and the lobbyists represented agreed to throw the weight of their organizations towards securing necessary appropriations and authorizations."

JOHN L. LEWIS

Communists have on many occasions expressed satisfaction with John L. Lewis. His pictures have appeared in communist publications. William Z. Foster, of the communist party, in his pamphlet entitled "Steel," says on page 62:

"The communist party heartily supports the C.I.O. . . . aims at the abolition of the capitalist system and the complete liquidation of the exploitation of man by man through the private ownership of industry and the land, by the establishment of socialism."

GARDNER JACKSON

Gardner Jackson, another person present at the Cosmos Club conference, is an official of the American Civil Liberties Union. He was a member of the Communist Negro Herndon Committee.

ROGER N. BALDWIN

But Mr. Roger N. Baldwin is the real "works" in the American Civil Liberties Union. We quote Mr. Baldwin's own words from Page 7 of the Thirtieth Anniversary Year Book (published in 1935) of the Class of 1905, of Harvard College, of which class he was a member:

"ROGER NASH BALDWIN writes, 'I have continued directing the unpopular fight for the rights of agitation, as Director of the American Civil Liberties Union; on the side engaging in many efforts to aid working class causes. I have been to Europe several times, mostly in connection with international radical activities, chiefly against war, fascism, and imperialism, . . . I am for Socialism, disarmament, and ultimately for abolishing the State itself as an instrument of violence and compulsion. I seek social ownership of property, the abolition of the propertied class and sole control by those who produce wealth. Communism is the goal . . .'"

DOROTHY DETZER Dorothy Detzer represented the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (a well-known radical organization) at that Cosmos Club conference.

OTHER LIBERALS, ETC. "Fight" does not tell who the "other Liberals and socially-minded people" were. Lack of space alone prevents our setting forth further evidence of the subversive affiliations of this group.

SO IT WOULD APPEAR THAT— So it would appear that the New York State Economic Council is being investigated at the instance primarily of the C.I.O., the American Civil Liberties Union, the American League Against War and Fascism, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and "other liberals and socially-minded people!"

WHAT THESE GROUPS STAND FOR These groups are working for the overthrow by one means or another of the American System of private enterprise and the substitution of some other system for it. They are receiving their inspiration, if not their express instructions, from Soviet Russia.

WHAT THE COUNCIL STANDS FOR The New York State Economic Council, for seven years, has striven to curb excessive public expenditure and to prevent further burdens on private enterprise. Several years ago we reached the conclusion that the major forces pushing expenditure up and private enterprise down are the active proponents in America of the philosophy of Marxian Socialism. These forces find their personification in the very organizations named above — and others like them.

ARE THESE GROUPS WHAT THREATEN DISINTEGRATION? Have these been the compelling force that has raised the federal debt from 20 to 37 billions in less than five years? Are they the real authors of the undistributed profits tax — of the one-sided Wagner Labor Disputes Law?

ARE THEY BACK OF WAGES AND HOURS? Are they the force that seeks today to jam through the Wages and Hours Bill — which no group in Congress seems to want — yet which we are told is likely to pass? Was it they who inspired the Farm Bill — which now threatens to cost a billion dollars and to deliver the farmers into the hands of a Washington Soviet?

Are they not the real enemy that America must fight?

A VITAL ISSUE The issue raised through the invasion of our offices far transcends our individual interests. This invasion strikes at human rights won by our ancestors 700 years ago on the field of Runnymede. Article IV of the Bill of Rights (Amendment IV to the Constitution of the United States) reads as follows:

"The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, . . ."

HOW GREAT IS THIS FORCE? Have the men who met at the Cosmos Club forced the nullification of this Right? Does the hand of Communism guide this Senate Subcommittee? Is it the hand of Communism that shapes these strange new Bills — to regiment farmer and worker alike?

WE ARE UNDER FIRE The New York State Economic Council has striven to the best of its ability to defend private enterprise. Now it is under fire.

We call upon the American people to come to the support of the basic principles of the Constitution — principles which in the past have saved America from the despots of Europe and Asia.

Mervin L. Hart

President,
NEW YORK STATE ECONOMIC COUNCIL, Inc.